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The Drug War
Applying the Lessons of Vietnam

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THE UNITED STATES IS LOSING the "War on Drugs." Despite a concerted effort on the part of several government agencies and also the United States military to stem the flow of cocaine, the drug has saturated the American market. Cocaine is more available, less expensive, and higher in quality than ever before. In fact, the present use of force serves to strengthen, not weaken, the cocaine trade, and military coercion is having a negative political, economic, and social impact in Latin America. One lesson of the Vietnam War was that force improperly applied can be worse than no force at all. This is true today in the drug war. The best contribution the military can make to the strategic objective—which is to reduce drug use in the United States—is to stop interdicting drugs.

This paper addresses the operational role of the United States military in the campaign to interdict the flow of cocaine from Latin America. For the Department of Defense, this *is* the drug war. It was to stem the tide of cocaine that the military entered the drug war in 1989, and cocaine is still the focus five years later in 1994.[1] Vietnam is used as a frame of reference because in that conflict—just as in the drug war—political, economic, and social factors played a large role in determining the military concept of operations. Vietnam also demonstrated, tragically, the consequences of failure to reassess a losing military strategy.

A realistic perspective on the employment of the military in the drug war must include strategic factors. Therefore, the national strategy and the present use of the military within this strategy are first examined. Parallels with Vietnam are developed to suggest that force is not an appropriate weapon for reducing the drug supply and that the use of force is having adverse consequences within the drug-producing region. Finally, recommendations are offered for a revised concept of operations—specifically, how the U.S. military can best be employed to fight the drug war.

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The War on Drugs

Cocaine consumption is up, and, despite the concerted efforts of the U.S. military, the supply has risen dramatically. In fact, there is such an abundance that cocaine sold in Europe transits through the United States![2] Since 1989, when the U.S. military first became involved, the harvest of coca, the production of cocaine, its delivery to the United States, and the use of cocaine within the U.S. have all gone up. Clearly, the present use of military force is not weakening the drug industry.

The Cocaine Industry. Cocaine users in the United States are fueling the economies of several Latin American countries. In 1991, between 1,050 and 1,300 tons of cocaine were produced in Latin America, up from 950 to 1,200 tons in 1990.[3] The primary producing countries are Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru, with a smaller amount coming from Ecuador.[4] To say that coca production is simply an "industry" in these Andean countries would be to understate the problem: eliminating production in Peru and Bolivia would put over *half a million* people out of work.[5] Fully 15 percent of the work force in Peru is economically dependent on cocaine, and the coca leaf creates nearly one half of Bolivia's foreign exchange.[6]

The cocaine cartels have financial resources that rival those of entire nations. The drug bosses offered to pay the national debt of Colombia, $14 billion, if its government would refrain from signing an extradition treaty with the United States. When the justice minister refused, he was shot in the head three times.[7] The cartels are responsible for murdering over four thousand people, including more than fifty judges in Colombia; yet by providing jobs, building affordable housing and public facilities, and donating millions of dollars each year to the poor, they have put together a formidable political base.[8]

Aggressive drug interdiction efforts by the U.S. have forced the cartels to diversify routes and improve their methods of shipment. Unfortunately this response has spread the war to other Latin American nations and created political, jurisdictional, and technological problems for the United States. Smugglers now ship to intermediate countries to disguise the point of origin.[9] For instance, Guatemala is now a primary air transshipment point from South America. Belize and El Salvador are being used more frequently than when our aggressive interdiction efforts began. Cocaine is dropped from aircraft into Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands for transfer to surface vessels. Mexico is a key transshipment point, since cocaine can be flown there and then driven into the United States.[10] Cocaine is increasingly being smuggled in commercial cargo containers, the numbers of which (over eight million arrive in the U.S. each year) make it impossible to inspect them all.[11] In addition, traffickers use

their drug profits to finance sophisticated equipment. Pilots are delivering cocaine by flying without lights, using night-vision goggles.[12] One boat seized off Puerto Rico in 1991 with a ton of cocaine was constructed of fiberglass in a "stealth" configuration specifically intended to avoid detection by radar.[13]

President Bush identified the shipment of "illicit narcotics" into the United States as a threat to the national security.[14] The National Drug Control Strategy was developed by the Bush administration in response to the problem, and it provided guidance to each of the thirty-three agencies involved in the drug war.[15]

The National Drug Control Strategy. The stated objective of the national strategy is to reduce drug *use* in the United States, and its measure of effectiveness is the level of drug use in the country.[16] Yet the budget emphasizes drug *interdiction.* Of the $12.7 billion spent in fiscal year 1993, 68 percent targeted supply reduction. The Department of Defense (DoD) portion of the 1993 drug control budget was $1.22 billion, all of which was intended for supply reduction.[17] The Clinton administration has changed the tone of the Bush strategy but not the emphasis. The 1994 budget allocates 65 percent to supply reduction.[18] Despite the announcement in October 1993 of a National Drug Control Strategy that purportedly shifts the focus away from interdiction, the plan for 1995 is to spend 59 percent, or $7.8 million, on reducing the drug supply. This is an increase, in real terms, from 1994.

The aims of interdiction are to reduce the supply of drugs, raise the traffickers' cost of doing business, and reduce its profitability. This strategic emphasis on supply reduction presupposes the classic supply-and-demand mechanism: that with reduced drug availability (supply), prices will go up, and use (demand) will go down. Unfortunately this economic model does not fit. Drugs are addictive—the majority of users will not be forced out of the market simply because drugs become more expensive.

Supply reduction involves the source, trafficking networks, and distribution within the United States. The Bush administration's "Andean Drug Initiative" targeted the source. That five-year, $2.2 billion program began in 1990 and involves the major cocaine producing countries of Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru. The goal of the massive aid is to "work with Andean governments to disrupt and destroy the growing, processing, and transportation of coca and coca products within the primary source and processing countries, in order to reduce the supply of cocaine entering our country."[19] The program provides military as well as economic assistance and includes crop eradication and substitution programs, weapons, financial and advisory assistance to military forces, direct aid to preserve local institutions (to counter corruption), and also aid to host-nation law enforcement agencies.[20] Although spending on drug interdiction enroute

to the U.S. will drop marginally in 1995, the Clinton administration proposes to increase this kind of aid to source countries in South America.[21]

The Role of the U.S. Military. The 1989 Defense Authorization Act designated DoD as the "single lead agency" for "detecting and monitoring" illegal drugs flowing into the U.S.[22] Substantial progress has been made in integrating and expanding surveillance, particularly outside the United States, but the military has assumed a more energetic role.[23] American forces are now key participants in "source" programs such as the Andean Initiative and are actively attempting to disrupt the supply networks from Latin America. The National Guard is even participating in counter-narcotics missions inside the U.S.[24] However, even with the recent realignment of unified commands, there is no single theater or functional commander in chief in charge of military forces in the drug war; instead, the military is organized to support other agencies of the U.S. government in the three "supply reduction" tasks noted above.

The United States Southern Command has taken the lead in the Andean source countries. Its personnel provide support in training, planning, communications, and logistics to Latin American military forces and law enforcement agencies. They directly support crop eradication programs, operations against processing and transportation facilities, and seizures of property.[25] These actions go beyond detection and monitoring. General George Joulwan, until recently commander in chief of the Southern Command, informed Congress that supporting the drug war is his command's top priority.[26]

The United States Atlantic Command has formed Joint Task Force Four, of which Task Group 4.1 and Task Unit 4.1.2 operate in the Caribbean and off the west coast of Central America to monitor, detect, and seize drugs. U.S. Coast Guard personnel are carried on board Navy ships so that arrests can be made. The United States Forces Command (now the Army component of the Atlantic Command) coordinates DoD support to law enforcement agencies within the United States. Going beyond strict detection and monitoring, the National Guard is assisting in such tasks as eradicating marijuana fields and manning border patrols in the southwestern United States. The North American Aerospace Defense Command remains a detection and monitoring service but, with Canadian cooperation, is now required to identify positively every aircraft approaching North America.[27]

The U.S. military is not "in charge" of the war on drugs; in fact, despite the formation of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in 1973, there is no single federal agency in charge. The State Department is the lead agency in dealings with foreign governments, the Customs Service and Coast Guard for air and sea interdiction, and the Justice Department for law enforcement within the United

States. The Department of Defense is in charge of detection and monitoring only.

Current State of the War on Drugs. The strategic objective of reducing drug use within the United States is not being met. Casual use of cocaine is down slightly, but "hard core" use is up, and hard-core users consume more than 60 percent of the drug supply.[28] The number of cocaine users is rising overall; the quality and availability of cocaine are at record levels.[29] The Inter-American Commission on Drug Policy attributes the drop in casual use of cocaine to changing attitudes, not reduced availability. This is a key point—gains in the drug war have been a result of user choices, not the market. The statistics are clear: cocaine is abundant, and attempts to reduce the supply have failed. If drug use were a matter of supply and demand, both hard-core and casual use would be up.

Senator John F. Kerry of Massachusetts stated during a 1992 Senate hearing concerning the Andean Drug Initiative that "I am concerned . . . that a lot of this [interdiction effort] may be a little bit like holding a bucket under a waterfall. Back in 1987 the DEA set a goal of reducing cocaine supplies by 50% in 3 years. That goal has been abandoned. In 1990, the President announced a new goal—reducing imports of cocaine and other hard drugs by 15% in 2 years. That goal, too, has been abandoned."[30]

Price on the street is a measure of availability; so also are purity and production. In 1991 the price of cocaine was between $11,000 and $40,000 per kilogram, with prices dropping in some areas. Prices are little different than ten years ago.[31] The purity of cocaine has "increased dramatically" since 1987.[32] Also in 1991, Customs, the Coast Guard, and the Border Patrol seized 115 tons of cocaine.[33] This amount represented only 10 percent of the estimated cocaine production in that year.[34] Despite crop eradication efforts in the Andean source countries, coca leaf production rose from 291,000 tons in 1987 to an estimated 332,540 in 1992.[35]

Military Effectiveness. The increased use of the military has not been effective in reducing the drug supply. One Air Force officer makes the Vietnam comparison: "We couldn't interdict the Ho Chi Minh trail. . . . Right now, coming up from the south, we have a Ho Chi Minh trail four thousand miles wide."[36]

In 1990 DoD devoted 48,025 flight hours and 3,830 steaming days to drug interdiction. Over half the E-3A AWACS flying hours available in 1990 were devoted to drug interdiction. The military detected 6,729 "potential drug trafficking aircraft," but these detections ultimately resulted in only forty-nine interdictions by civilian agencies and another twenty-four flights aborted by drug

runners.[37] This represents a very large commitment in resources for a very small return.

The General Accounting Office said in September 1991 that "DOD's detection and monitoring efforts have not had a significant impact on the national goal of reducing drug supplies. The estimated cocaine flow into the United States did not decrease in 1989 and 1990." The report goes on to say, "Many smugglers will continue to transport cocaine into the United States with impunity, unless (1) better search technology is developed and (2) the profit margin in cocaine trafficking is reduced. Interdiction alone cannot raise cocaine traffickers' costs and risks enough to make a difference, regardless of how well DOD carries out its detection and monitoring mission."[38]

The Vietnam Connection

Is it valid, or fair, to compare the current state of the war on drugs to the experience of the United States and its military in Vietnam? No troops are being killed in the fight against drugs—the president has specifically banned U.S. military forces from participating in direct combat. The country is united concerning the objective, reducing drug use. It can be argued that military involvement in the drug war is good training and preparation for "real" war. Naval operations at sea in concert with the Coast Guard and Air Force offer valuable joint operations experience. For the North American Aerospace Defense Command to identify all contacts can be seen as a contribution to its primary mission of protecting the air space; Forces Command might as properly defend American borders against the drug threat as any other. Special forces gain valuable experience planning clandestine operations, and finally, Southern Command is performing an important role by operating with Latin American countries, training personnel, and building infrastructure that could be of use during a crisis.

The central question, however, remains: is the present use of force helping attain the strategic objective? If it is not, then the $1.17 billion being spent this year by DoD could be put to better use. Certainly in 1994 there is no shortage of either regional conflicts or training opportunities; U.S. military commitments are growing around the world. In the worst case—if the present use of force is in fact counterproductive—there is no rational justification for staying the course.

Though the phrase "the lessons of Vietnam" has become a cliché, the Vietnam experience does illuminate the problems we face today in attempting to use force in a war that cannot be won by force. In the Vietnam war, political, economic, and social factors conspired against the effective use of the military. The use of force alone could not achieve the strategic objective, and the *inappropriate* use of force ultimately damaged American interests.

The enemy's center of gravity is the "hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed."[39] North Vietnam's center of gravity was in its political ties to the Soviet Union and China. It was not feasible, politically or militarily, to use force against this center of gravity. Instead, U.S. strength was frittered away in a war of attrition. As long as the North Vietnamese maintained their alliances it was impossible for the United States to win by force of arms. Only when North Vietnam sensed that the United States was dividing its coalition by political means (i.e., when President Richard Nixon went to Peking and Moscow in 1972) was peace finally made.[40]

In the drug war, the enemy's center of gravity is the demand for drugs, which creates the economic incentive to supply them. If cocaine were not profitable, the supply would dry up. After five years, as we have seen, the U.S. military's contribution to drug interdiction has not been successful in either pushing up the price of cocaine or making it unprofitable. Military force simply cannot influence the cultural problems that make supplying cocaine lucrative. For that reason, the present use of force is inappropriate: it is not directed, in any way, at the enemy's center of gravity.

There were restrictive rules of engagement. The military was bound by strict rules of engagement in Vietnam. Shipping that was destined for the North Vietnamese war effort could not be attacked, and North Vietnam itself was placed off limits to U.S. ground troops for fear of spreading the war. The Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos was a safe logistics pipeline to South Vietnam. Similarly, there are restrictive rules of engagement for U.S. military forces in the drug war. The military cannot be involved in direct combat, the sovereignty of drug-producing nations is inviolate, and foreign air space cannot be entered without permission, even in pursuit of a known drug carrier. The issue is not that the rules of engagement should be changed but that the very existence of such restrictions is an indication that force cannot be used effectively in the drug war.

The people were given little incentive. As early as 1964, North Vietnam had apportioned almost four million acres of land to peasants in communist-controlled areas of South Vietnam without (until after the war ended) a hint of collectivization; it had also organized labor unions.[41] Throughout the war, the communists were concerned to gain the support of the South Vietnamese population. By contrast, the South Vietnamese government became ever more corrupt and removed from the people. It proved impossible for the South Vietnamese government, or the United States, to gain strong support for the war. Indiscriminate use of force exacerbated this problem. Communism became an attractive alternative for many South Vietnamese.

The situation is the same in Latin America today. The economic well-being of Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia is tied to coca, and eradication programs drive

a wedge between the people and their governments. The drug traffickers have presented themselves as an attractive alternative to existing civil authorities, who are perceived to be supporting the United States against the best interests of the people. U.S. support in law enforcement, raids, and crop eradication programs amplifies the discontent.[42] These factors serve to empower the drug traffickers and make government law enforcement programs less successful.

The enemy's ability to sustain war was unaffected. North Vietnam enjoyed the material and financial support of both the Soviet Union and China. Its ability to fight the United States was essentially limitless as long as its ports and borders remained open and sufficient manpower was available. Sustaining the guerrilla war required only fifteen tons of supplies per day.[43] Not attacking the source of sustainment, without building a wall around South Vietnam the United States could not reduce this minuscule logistics tail enough to affect the war.

So it is with the drug traffickers, who are geographically diverse, well financed, and easily able to reconstitute after a loss of a shipment, a route, or even entire coca farms. One DoD official said recently before Congress, "I predict that it will be kind of like the Pillsbury Dough Boy. Once we push them out of an area, they will pop up elsewhere."[44] If one cartel is damaged by military action, another will quickly take its place. As long as the huge economic incentive to get into the business remains, force will not discourage the traffickers.

Inappropriate measures of success were used. The term "body count" has become synonymous with tragedy and futility. But what is measuring success by "tons seized" if not a body count–type statistic? The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support stated in 1991 that though he specifically resisted using these statistics as a way of monitoring performance, these numbers were the only way to put a positive "spin" on the military's contribution.[45] The National Drug Control Strategy clearly states that "the levels of drug use remain our paramount indicators." Yet "tons seized," "production facilities destroyed," "aircraft seized," and "acres eradicated" are used extensively by DoD to report progress. There is simply no other way to measure success in military interdiction efforts, and this in itself should be a sign that the tactical employment of the military is not related to the ultimate objective—reducing drug use in the United States.

One of the tragedies of the Vietnam War was that it became apparent to members of the Johnson administration as early as December 1965 that the United States was not going to win a war of attrition against North Vietnam—yet it was easier from a political standpoint to plunge ahead rather than conduct a serious reassessment.[46] Neither was there an honest reappraisal in the military of the operational concept of "grinding down" the enemy to achieve strategic

success.[47] Some argue that the political restrictions against expanding the war made any other course of action impossible. Nevertheless, if one is losing, an honest reassessment must be made. After five years of military involvement in the drug war, that time has come.

A Strategic Estimate

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff directs that each theater commander in chief prepare strategic estimates for his area of responsibility. As defined by the Chairman, "the strategic estimate encompasses all the considerations that adversely affect the attainment of objectives throughout the operational continuum."[48] Together with military considerations, the commander must analyze the political, social, psychological, and economic factors bearing upon the area. The concept of operations, which ties the strategic objective to the tactical employment of forces, must take all factors into account. In the drug war, not only is the present tactical employment of military force not creating a condition that will allow the strategic objectives to be met, but the present operational concept even has a *negative* impact on the political, social, psychological, and economic dimensions.

Political Factors. As noted, the United States Southern Command actively supports "source" programs such as the Andean Initiative. To the extent force is involved to suppress the drug industry, it is having an adverse political effect.

The program destabilizes Andean countries. The weapons, training, and direct financial aid from the U.S. serve only to legitimize and support already corrupt segments of military and law enforcement organizations. Even worse, production of cocaine is being spread to other countries in the region.[49] Although many brave men and women have given their lives to fight the drug scourge in the Andes, the huge sums of money offered by the traffickers buys cooperation. In Colombia, a police captain earns a salary of about $180 per month; cooperation with traffickers can bring in $5,000 a month.[50] Twenty-seven Colombian prison guards were paid $1.5 million to allow Pablo Escobar to walk out of prison.[51] The U.S. State Department recognizes that "official corruption" as a result of the tremendous financial power of the cocaine cartels is a serious problem.[52] One development worker in the region said that "to bring in the army [for drug control] would be the best way to promote drug trafficking in Bolivia."[53] Herbicide spraying of coca fields also sends a negative political message, particularly when U.S. military personnel plan and provide logistic support. The Inter-American Commission on Drug Policy reports that the "unintended consequences of an increased military role in drug enforcement in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia have included greater violence and increased human

rights violations."[54] This increased local military role is made possible only by the direct support of the U.S. military, yet that support is having the unintended effect of turning the people away from the very institutions that are there to protect them.

The U.S. military has so far avoided direct combat but is very active in support of foreign military forces. American troops are on the ground in significant numbers, and there are calls within the United States for greater military involvement. The Clinton administration is planning to expand military operations in Latin America.[55]

The situation is similar to that of Vietnam in early 1965. Many people then thought that the American military should shoulder more of the burden, but doing so ultimately damaged U.S. interests. Today, the sovereignty of Latin American countries must be preserved—the use of the U.S. military increases the dependence of those countries upon the United States, erodes confidence in local institutions, and drives the political base into the hands of the enemy.

Economic Factors. The economic center of gravity in the drug war is the money to be made in selling drugs. The National Drug Control Strategy first targets the traffickers' "core organization" in their home countries, in order to drive up their costs. "Key to disrupting these operations is destruction of the trafficking infrastructure, through the investigation, prosecution, punishment, and, where appropriate, extradition of drug traffickers and money launderers; and seizure of drugs and assets; and the destruction of processing and shipping facilities."[56] As noted above, the use of U.S. and local military force is vital to this effort. The DoD budget submission for 1992 describes a success story: "The results of the operation were impressive. A drug 'kingpin' and some 131 others were arrested. Numerous commercial and residential properties were seized along with 22 aircraft, over $300,000 in U.S. currency and over 1,000 kilograms of processed and unprocessed coca products. Seven laboratories and 41 clandestine airstrips were destroyed and a major trafficking ring was totally disrupted."[57] It is hard to argue with this kind of *tactical* success, but is this tactical success furthering the strategic goal? Cocaine cartels have reacted by diversifying their production base, modes of transport, and their products.

How the cocaine market reacts to stress has received intensive study. One analysis argues that "as in the legal trade for commodities such as sugar or wheat, a crop failure in one production zone—whether from war, drought, or disease—creates a shortage of supply and raises the price for producers elsewhere, stimulating increased production in the next crop cycle."[58] The supply-and-demand model *does* apply here; the market may be hurt in the short term, but ultimately the industry is strengthened. Suppression in one country spreads the problem to another country, a pattern that complicates both the economic and

political pictures. The crop eradication campaign in Bolivia pushed production to Brazil; destruction of processing facilities in Colombia spread that industry into Ecuador.[59] The cocaine industry is like poison ivy: scratching gives some short-term relief—which is hard to resist—but it spreads the problem.

The National Drug Control Strategy also targets the supply by interdicting drugs en route. "This raises the traffickers' cost of doing business by forcing them to take expensive countermeasures such as using longer and more circuitous routes, training new personnel to replace those apprehended, purchasing sophisticated electronic equipment to detect law enforcement surveillance, developing new concealment techniques, replacing expensive seized assets, and stockpiling drugs closer to the production area, making them more vulnerable to foreign law enforcement efforts."[60] There is no doubt that the traffickers are being forced to use more sophisticated equipment and new routes, but is this a good thing? Trafficking has now spread to Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, and the island of Hispaniola. Traffickers are taking advantage of the problems in Haiti (resulting from the ouster of President Aristide), setting up transshipment facilities there.[61]

It is said that what does not kill you, makes you stronger. The ingenuity of the traffickers' methods, no doubt spurred by more intense interdiction efforts, has become legendary, and the availability, purity, and price of cocaine all indicate that their product is getting through to the U.S. in quantities sufficient for their purposes. In fact, in European countries, where little outside interdiction is attempted, the price for cocaine ranges from $36,000 to $100,000 per kilogram, three times the price in the United States, where billions of dollars is spent on drug interdiction.[62]

A by-product of U.S. suppression and interdiction efforts is the ominous trend of the Latin American cocaine cartels to diversify their products. Opium (the source of heroin) is now being produced in large quantities in South America. The State Department estimates that over fifty thousand acres of poppy are being cultivated in Colombia.[63] The number of heroin overdoses reported by New York City hospitals nearly doubled in 1991.[64] In the drug trade, there is strength in diversity.

Social and Psychological Factors. The present concept of operations is driving Latin American countries to a deeper dependence on the cocaine industry because active interdiction keeps prices artificially high. The huge profits generated by cocaine sales return to the producing countries as jobs and foreign exchange. Over $600 million annually accrues to Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia from the drug trade.[65] Approximately 225,000 families in Peru are dependent on coca for a living.[66] Bolivia receives over $800 million each year from the U.S. and other countries to reduce economic dependence on coca, yet the amount

of harvestable coca has grown every year for the past five years.[67] There simply is not sufficient incentive for a Bolivian farmer to stop growing coca as long as it remains more lucrative than food crops. Relief will come only when there is a reduction in the price for coca.

U.S. military forces, as they are presently being used, have the long-term effect of strengthening this dependence upon cocaine and other drugs in Latin America and spreading the influence of drug trafficking in the region. Efforts to make the drug trade more risky for the suppliers keep the prices high, encourage diversity, and ultimately stimulate production.

Some argue that it is necessary for the U.S. military to be involved in the drug war because the United States must be perceived as having the national will and resolve to fight the drug scourge—in other words, because symbolism is important. Is it important enough? It might be, if the present use of force were not harmful to Latin American and U.S. interests, or if warship operation, flying hours, or contingency operations were inexpensive. Unfortunately, none of these is the case.

It is interesting to recall the 1988 comments of then Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci before Congress on the role of the military in the drug war. "None of the interdiction approaches in and of themselves will work. I believe that these are not solutions to the problem, but rather the result of our rising frustrations and our inability to find a real solution."[68]

A Revised Operational Concept

Ultimately the demand for drugs must drop if real progress is to be made—a cultural problem that is immune to a forcible solution. However, the military can help to create the conditions necessary to improve the prospects. The objectives must be to reduce the price of cocaine, weaken the drug industry, and strengthen Latin American governments.

The following recommendations for a revised concept of operations emphasize the *supporting* role of the Department of Defense in this realm:

- *Use the military strictly for monitoring and surveillance* to identify sources and routes. This was the original mission assigned to DoD by Congress in 1989. Stop devoting DoD resources to active interdiction; simply identifying sources and routes will aid civilian drug enforcement agencies and limit the spread of trafficking. In the long term, removing the emphasis on interdiction will reduce the price for cocaine and the strength of the drug industry. Admittedly, there will be a short-term increase in the volume of drugs entering the U.S.; however, it will be hardly noticeable, since the market is already saturated and those who want cocaine can easily obtain it.

• *Continue to integrate* communications and monitoring equipment with civilian law enforcement agencies to keep all involved abreast of the flow of drugs.

• *Stop military aid meant for* eradicating crops, destroying airfields, blowing up production facilities, and seizing assets. Focus on civic action programs; combined exercises, drilling wells, building schools, improving roads, and upgrading airfields are all programs that would improve relations, provide in-country experience for U.S. troops, and build the infrastructure needed in a contingency.

• *Stop releasing stories* on interdiction results. At best, they give only anecdotal evidence of progress. Published "body count" statistics may even serve to encourage traffickers to use alternate methods and routes. Also, that more cocaine is being seized probably indicates that more is being delivered. Success should be measured by reduction in the number of people using cocaine in the United States.

• *Stop arming and financing* Latin American law enforcement agencies and military forces. These countries have their own incentives to fight drugs. The United States should continue to provide economic aid, but for it to support the use of force, particularly in the Andean countries, is counter to U.S. interests. As the price for cocaine drops, the market will serve to remove fields from business, and crop substitution programs, already heavily subsidized by the U.S., will become effective.

After five years of military involvement in the drug war, the problem has grown. The use of military force works at cross-purposes with the desired result. While U.S. economic assistance in Latin America would be more effective if the price for cocaine dropped, military intervention serves to keep prices up. While the National Drug Control Strategy targets the drug supply in order to make drugs less available in the United States, cocaine, the primary target, is more available than ever. While the Andean Initiative is pumping more than $2 billion into Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia as an incentive for those countries to become less dependent on coca and reduce corruption, the use of force pushes the coca harvest and cocaine production to other countries and feeds corruption.

Just as in Vietnam, the overwhelming advantages the United States possesses in technology, intelligence services, and military strength are not sufficient to overcome the political, economic, and social factors that influence the drug war. The present use of force is having unintended consequences in Latin America and in the United States. U.S. military planners should apply lessons from the Vietnam War and develop a concept of operations that ties the tactical employment of forces to the ultimate objective. In this case, less force is the answer.

Notes

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Ψ

Teach me, and I will be quiet;
show me where I have been wrong.
How painful are honest words!

Job 6:24–5

In war the first principle is to disobey orders. *Any fool can obey orders*!

Sir John Fisher
after the Dogger Bank action, January 1915